

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SCANNING  
AND STERILIZING MAIL RECEIVED AT A DROP BOX**

**ABSTRACT**

A drop box for receiving mail pieces for collection and delivery by a postal service  
5 includes an enclosure having a slot sized for receiving mail pieces, a feeder positioned  
inside the drop box for engaging and conveying mail pieces inserted into the slot, a  
detector for detecting a potential contaminant inside the drop box, and a controller for  
initiating a preprogrammed action when a potential contaminant is detected inside the drop  
box. The preprogrammed action may include locking the box and sounding an alarm  
10 coupled to the controller. The drop box may also be equipped with means for sterilizing  
the drop box and its contents such as a source of electromagnetic radiation and/or a source  
of a chemical sterilizing agent.